



Tools for Transformation: A Common Assessment Tool

The transformation of Indiana's behavioral health system includes a focus on using data to make practice and policy decisions. Indiana is building the capacity to use multiple information based tools to improve the quality of mental health and addiction services: the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strength (CANS), the Consumer Service Review (CSR), and the Wraparound Fidelity Index (WFI-4.0). The tools, consistent with system of care values and principles, focus on the needs of children and families. This TWG Alert highlights the CANS.

The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment is a functional assessment that rates multiple domains: child's emotional and behavioral needs, functioning, risk behaviors and strengths and the caregiver needs and strengths. The CANS has been developed by John Lyons, PhD, in collaboration with several states' child service systems.

Using a common assessment tool across systems- mental health and addictions, child welfare, juvenile justice, Medicaid and education --recognizes that child behavioral health services are provided across all public child service systems. The CANS provides a common language, objective criteria to support decisions about intervention plans and intensity of services, monitors progress through outcome measures, and supports quality improvement initiatives. Information from the CANS will support decisions at multiple levels—direct services, supervision, program management, and system management. Indiana's CANS tools and supporting documents are posted under "Documents" at ibhas.in.gov.

Indiana's CANS tools are being incrementally implemented across the child service systems. In November 2006, the Department of Correction began using the CANS in their facilities and in targeted re-entry programs. In 2007, the Department of Education began supporting a tiered assessment and intervention initiative in a metropolitan school district that incorporates the CANS as a valuable tool to assist decisions regarding the nature and intensity of targeted student services. Within the Medicaid programs, each of the managed care organizations has certified SuperUsers. Information from the CANS will help provide a basis for discussing the behavioral health needs of children in Hoosier Healthwise as CMHCs and a few other child service agencies begin using the CANS. The CANS is being used as part of eligibility determination, to inform care plans, and to monitor progress for the Community Alternative to Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) Grant. PRTFs will be asked to begin using the CANS as part of the assessment and prior authorization process. The Department of Child Services is adding the CANS to the residential care contracts beginning January 2008.

During SFY2007, about 250 CANS "SuperUsers" were trained to support local implementation of the CANS – training, supervision, and integration into everyday practice. Through the SuperUsers and a web-based training and certification system, Indiana's behavioral health providers are being trained and certified to use the CANS in preparation for the July 1, 2007, statewide implementation by DMHA providers. A database, the Indiana Behavioral Health Assessment System (IBHAS), was developed to capture CANS data, generate recommended a levels of care based on the CANS, and to provide a variety of reports to users at all levels of the child-serving system.

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